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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

CLASSICAL ART

FOURTH CENTURY ROOM

TERRA COTTA FIGURINES AND VASES

IX

CLASSICAL ART

Fourth Century Room:
Terra cotta figurines
and vases

Department of Classical Art
Gallery Guide no. 9

CLASSICAL ART.

Fourth Century Room.

Terra-cotta figurines from Tanagra, Corinth, Eretria and other localities in Greece.

Figurines of terra-cotta present an uninterrupted series from prehistoric to late Greek and Roman times (compare Case 3 in the Archaic Room and Case 6 in the Fifth Century Room) and follow a course of artistic development similar to that of works in metal and in stone through the successive periods. In the fourth century B. C. Greek art relinquished gradually the dignity and seriousness of the preceding age, and turned to a familiar treatment of lighter themes drawn from common life. One result of this tendency is evident in the numerous terra-cotta figures of girls and women represented as they might have been seen from day to day in their homes and on the streets of Thebes or Athens. The most charming of these figurines have been found at Tanagra, a small town north of Athens and east of Thebes, where they were placed in graves during the fourth and third centuries B. C.; many have been discovered at Corinth, at Eretria and at other places in Greece, and also at Myrina, near Smyrna, and elsewhere in Asia Minor, and in southern Italy (compare Cases 2, 3 and 4 in the Late Greek Room).

The statuettes were not modelled free-hand, but were (usually) composed of separate parts formed in terra-cotta moulds. By varying the combinations of parts a great variety of different figures could be produced from a comparatively limited number of moulds. Before firing the parts were joined with liquid clay and the finer examples were carefully retouched with a wooden tool, and various attributes, such as a fan, a wide-brimmed hat, a mirror or a vase were added to give each figure individuality. After firing the surface was coated with a dull white slip; hair, eyes and lips were appropriately colored and shades of blue and rose sometimes yellow and green were applied to the garments, while the white pigment itself seems to have been slightly tinted and polished to represent flesh. The statuettes are hollow as a rule, and usually have a large hole in the back to allow the escape of steam and to prevent cracking as the clay contracted during the process of firing.

The significance of these figurines and the purpose for which they were made are much debated; the most natural conclusion seems to be that they possessed no special ritualistic or religious meaning, but were

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simply offerings in tombs thought pleasing to the dead because attractive to the donor.

Case 1 (on east wall).

The objects in this case are all from the same tomb at Eretria, on the island of Euboea. The tomb consists of a vaulted rectangular chamber of stone buried under a conical mound of earth. There were five marble sarcophagi in the chamber decorated with red and blue and inscribed with the names of the occupants; two were shaped like couches, two like thrones and one like a chest. From the style of the offerings which it contained and on the analogy of similar chamber tombs in Macedonia, which date from the time of Alexander the Great, it is evident that the tomb at Eretria was constructed during the early part of the Hellenistic Period. It may have belonged to an aristocratic Macedonian family resident in Greece.

Among the votive offerings were miniature shields and little figures of Eros. Of the twenty-eight examples of shields in the collection of the Museum half are of the round Argive form and half are elliptical, - the so-called Galatian shield. Three different devices are employed on the round shields:

1, - head of Medusa of the beautiful type with outspread wings in her hair and snakes knotted beneath her chin, set against a background of scales which recalls the aegis of Athena;

2, - head of Helios, the Sun-god, surrounded by rays;

3, - head of a youth set between stars. The elliptical shields also display three devices:

1, - winged head of Medusa on the central rib of the shield, against a background of scales;

2, - head of a youth in the middle of a thunder-bolt;

3, - head of a dog on the rib of the shield. All the shields retain traces of color, - red, blue, violet, white and gold.

The diminutive flying Erotes (Cupids) also retain much of their original gay coloring. They are thought of as hovering within the tomb, and each carries some object or performs some action useful or pleasing to the dead. Three have box-mirrors (Top row, no. 1; Second row, no. 8; Third row, no. 4; compare the mirrors shown in case 7, in this room); others have vases (Top row, nos. 2 and 9; Second row, no. 6; Third row, no. 9); one carries a casket with raised lid (Top row, no. 7); another a comic mask (Second row, no. 5); two are bearing fillets (Third row, nos. 1 and 3); others have musical instruments, - a lyre (Second row, no. 1),

a double flute (second row, no. 2); this Eros wears an Oriental costume and has Oriental wings with curling tips, cymbals (second row, no. 3). The attitude of the fourth figure in the second row indicates that this Eros also was playing a musical instrument, possibly a lyre. In the second row the ninth Eros at the right holds up a votive half figure of a goddess similar to one exhibited in the Fifth Century Room. The objects carried by some of the other Erotes have been lost.

At the bottom of the case are six gold ornaments.

Left to right.

Part of a gold ornament, probably a diadem, of exceptionally delicate workmanship. The open frame of gold is filled with many small flowers attached to scrolls of gold wire. On the conventionalized honeysuckles as well as on the naturalistic flowers, the details of every petal have been wrought with greatest care. In the heart of some of the flowers were set bits of colored glass paste; a few of these settings are still preserved; some of the lost pastes have been replaced by modern substitutes.

Necklace.

The necklace is composed of alternate links of twisted gold wire and of sardonyx cut in the same shape. The pendant consists of a small figure of Eros of solid gold, from which hangs a hollow cylinder decorated with the heads of winged griffins in open relief work.

Two fragments of a gold necklace.

Each fragment includes one end of the clasp decorated with a conventional pattern in filigree. The necklace itself is a narrow braid of seven strands of very fine gold wire. From the braided band hangs a row of minute closely spaced rosettes, and from these a fringe of triangular pendants with convex sides. Each pendant is tipped with two small granules.

Three gold bars.

Each has a border and a spiral pattern in filigree. To one bar are attached two pendants with the mask of a Satyr at the top; there is also a part of a third pendant.

Case 2 (beside the doorway to the Second Marble Room).

Terra-cotta figurines from Tanagra. Fourth and third centuries B. C.

East side.

Top shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Her cloak (himation) is drawn over her head as a veil; she wears a round wide-brimmed sun-hat (petasos) with a tall central peak, and carries a fan. The face and neck are a ruddy color, there is deep red on the lips, and black on the eyes and brows. There are traces of red on the hat and on the fan, and of pink on the cloak.

Statuette. Woman seated.

The large chair which has a rounded back and curved legs, and is covered with a cushion, is of the typical Greek form common on red-figured vases and on Attic grave reliefs. An ample cloak closely envelops the figure, leaving only the face exposed. There are remains of red on the cheeks and on the lips. The garment was white or grey, with broad black borders.

Statuette. Woman standing.

The upper part of the body and both arms are wrapped in a cloak; the right arm lies across the breast, with the hand at the throat. The cloak was pink with a broad black stripe; below it the under-dress (chiton), striped with black and white, falls in vertical folds.

Statuette. Small boy, standing.

Figures of children and of Eros in terra-cotta as well as in marble, bronze and other materials became common during the Hellenistic age. This boy wears a white himation, and has a yellow wreath on his head. There are traces of brownish red in the hair and of pink on the flesh. The base is modern.

Middle shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing.

The figure is finished both at the front and at the back.

Statuette. Woman standing.

From the same mould as the preceding figure. The

head is antique but originally belonged to another statuette.

Statuette.

A humorous and accurate observer of animal life modelled this summary sketch of a fox with short ears and bushy tail scratching its head with one hind paw.

Statuette.

A laughing little girl in her elder sister's clothes. She lifts the long cloak with both arms in an endeavor to keep it from trailing on the ground.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing.

This is one of the finest Tanagra types, and its great popularity is attested by extant examples in several sizes. Copies of it are found among figurines made in Southern Italy.

Statuette. Woman standing.

She is dressed for out-of-doors, and pauses a moment in thought with head bent slightly forward, resting her chin in her right hand.

Statuette.

A young athlete, partly draped, stands in an easy attitude. He has a strygil (flesh-scraper) in his left hand and wears a heavy round wreath on his head.

South end.

Top shelf.

Statuette. A young woman seated on a rock.

She wears a kerchief, a long chiton with a V-shaped opening at the neck and a cloak. In her lap she holds a phiale, -a round shallow dish. A dove was perhaps attached to her left wrist. Traces of yellow, pink, blue and pearl-grey remain on the figure.

Middle shelf.

Statuette.

A woman closely wrapped in a large cloak and

wearing a sun-hat, sits resting and lost in thought upon a rock.

Bottom shelf.

Statuette.

A young woman sitting on a rock. Traces of color,-- blue, pink, black, yellow and red. The base is modern.

West side.

Top shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Examples of this type exist in several sizes.

Statuette.

A youth, standing, with his chin muffled in his cloak (chlamys). Red on hair and boots, pink on flesh and yellow on cloak.

Statuette. Girl, standing.

Remarkable for the preservation of color on the head; pupils of eyes, brown; upper lids and brows, red; lips, red; face, flesh color; hair, dark red-brown.

Statuette. An old nurse with a baby.

A number of examples of this type, with slight differences of detail, are known.

Middle shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing, with her hands clasped in front.

Statuette. Girl standing,

The pose is the same as that of the figurine at the left, although this figure is of smaller size, and represents a younger person.

Statuette. Woman standing.

A veil is tied about her head.

Statuette. Eros sleeping on a rock by a roadside herm from which the head is missing. Abundant remains of color,-- gold on left wing and on fillet;

blue and pink on wings; deep pink and white on cloak; flesh-color on body; red on lips; brown-red on hair; pearly grey on rock. This ranks among the finest of the figurines found at Tanagra.

Statuette. Woman standing.

She carries a fan in her left hand.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Tyro watching her twin sons, Pelias and Neleus.

The mother sits on a high rock and looks down sorrowfully at her sleeping babies in their cradle, which she has just set afloat on the water, entrusting them to the care of their father Poseidon. Illustrations of this myth are very unusual in Greek art.

Statuette. A woman, perhaps the goddess Aphrodite, partially draped in a large cloak, sits on a rock, holding up three apples in one hand, and having a fan in the other hand. Near her a draped herm of Priapos, a figure commonly set up in gardens to induce abundant crops.

Statuette. A youth, standing.

His himation (cloak) is worn in a manner which leaves the torso nude. On his head is a thick round wreath with large leaves hanging from it.

Case 4 (centre of room).

Terra-cotta figurines, chiefly from Tanagra.
Fourth and third centuries B. C.

West side.

Top shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman walking.

Her right hand, concealed by her cloak, is raised to support her left arm which is bent across her breast. Her head inclines forward pensively.

Vase (lekythos) with plastic decoration.

The birth of Aphrodite. The goddess is kneeling, surrounded by golden flowers in the midst of an opening scallop-shell, rose-tinted on the inside. Two slender Erotes with long, slightly curling wings are hovering

above, and catch the edges of her mantle, which is blown away from her body by a strong sea breeze and forms a background for her head and figure. The proportions of the figures and the style of the composition indicate that the vase is an Attic work of the early part of the fourth century B. C. This is one of the most exquisite examples of such plastic vases.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Clad as usual in dress (chiton) and cloak (himation); she holds a fan coquettishly up to her chin.

Middle shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Boy sitting on a rock.

He wears a heavy round wreath, and a sleeveless chiton.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Her voluminous cloak almost conceals her dress. Her hair is wound in a heavy coil around the back of her head.

Statuette. A little girl standing with a duck in her left hand and leaning her right hand on a low square pillar. She wears a heavy round wreath on her curly hair. Ducks were familiar household pets.

Statuette. Little girl, standing.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman walking.

She has a fan in her left hand; her cloak is pulled up over her head. Her hat is missing.

Statuette. Girl, standing.

The body turned strongly to the left, is clearly outlined under the garment.

Statuette. Woman, seated.

She is sitting within doors, feeding a pet bird (missing) from a bowl with scalloped sides held on her knee.

Statuette. Woman, standing.

She carries a fan in her left hand; her hair is tied up in a kerchief.

Statuette. Woman, standing.

Her dress (chiton) has a V-shaped opening at the neck; her hair is arranged in a coil at the back of the head.

South end.

Middle shelf.

Statuette. A youth in deep thought seated on a rock supporting his head on his right hand, recalls the Pensoso of Michel Angelo. The heavy material of the cloak is wrapped in broad folds about his body and fastened with a large round brooch on his right shoulder.

Bottom shelf.

A pair of statuettes. Two girls playing astragals, a game in which knuckle-bones took the place of dice. The girl at the right carries a bag in her left hand for holding the pieces of the game. Owing to the disappearance of color from the close fitting dresses, the upper part of the figures seems to be nude. The blue color on both statuettes is modern.

East side.

Middle shelf, left to right.

Statuette. A smiling little girl seated on a square block. From her right hand hang a tambourine and a fillet.

Statuette. Woman walking.

Her head is wrapped in her cloak. Compare the next figurine at the right.

Statuette. Woman dancing, or rapidly walking. This is a replica of the preceding figure, varying in slight details. The type seems to have been very popular.

Statuette. A little girl, seated.

The large bag in her right hand contains the

pieces used in playing the game of astragalos.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Her cloak is pulled up over her head like a hood; a fan in her left hand.

Statuette. Woman standing, with a fan in her left hand.

This figurine is similar to the preceding, with variations in detail.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Said to be from Anthedon, near Tanagra.

Statuette. A shaggy satyr bringing a basket of grapes to the vintage.

Statuette. Woman standing.

Her cloak is drawn over her head like a hood; she carries an amphora (two-handled vase) on her left arm, and a fan in her right hand.

North end.

Middle shelf.

Statuette. Eros floating down through the air.

He wears a small cloak, and a crown.

Bottom shelf.

Statuette. Eros.

He wears a cloak, and has a heavy round wreath on his head; in his right hand he carries an open mirror.

Statuette. A young woman leaning on a low column.

This type was extremely popular, and is found in several sizes. It was copied by makers of figurines in Sicily and in southern Italy.

Case 3 (northwest corner of room)

Case 3. (northwest corner of room).

Terra-cotta figurines, chiefly Corinthian and Attic.

East side.

Top shelf, left to right. Corinthian.

Statuette. Woman standing on a circular moulded base.

She is dressed in a long robe (chiton) and a heavy cloak (himation) which is drawn up over her head. She also wears a sun-hat (petasos).

Three statuettes. Dancing girls.

Each figure is posed on a low stool; two of the stools have feet in the form of an animal's paws, and across the front a panel decorated with griffins in relief. Figurines representing dancers, veiled or unveiled, are very common, and there are almost as many varieties of poses as there are specimens.

Statuette. Woman standing.

She is dressed in the usual robe and cloak, and has earrings in her ears. The wavy mass of her hair is gathered in a small knot at the back of the head.

Second shelf, left to right. Attic.

Statuette. A girl seated on a rock holding an open box-mirror in her hand. On the outside of the cover is a face in relief imitating the repousse decoration on bronze mirror-cases. (Compare the bronze Greek mirrors exhibited in Case 7 in this room).

Statuette. An old man.

He bends forward, walking painfully, and was supporting himself on a staff held in his right hand. The marks of old age are portrayed with extraordinary realism.

Statuette. Aphrodite(?)

The action apparently indicates preparation for the bath. Her hair is drawn up into a high flame-like peak (lampadion); her adornments are a wreath of leaves, ear-jewels and a necklace. The flesh was originally white.

Statuette. A woman seated on a rock. From Tanagra.

Statuette. Dancing girl.

She wears ear-jewels and a wreath of leaves. Her

light voluminous drapery clings about her as she moves.

Statuette. Caricature of a poet or a philosopher declaiming.

Statuette. Woman standing, holding an apple in her left hand. From Aegina.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. Woman standing, with her left arm behind her back.

Statuette. Woman standing, lifting her cloak with her left hand.

Statuette. A youth, fully draped, leaning against a pillar.

Statuette. A little girl with a hoop.
From Aegina.

The colors are unusually well preserved.

Statuette. A youth, standing.

He wears a round hat (petasos), a short tunic (chiton) and a cloak (chlamys).

Statuette. A youth leaning against a pillar.

He wears a cloak, and high boots with red lacings. On his head is a heavy round wreath. There is a hole in the right hand in which some object was fastened.

Statuette. A woman leaning on a low pillar.

A dove perches on her left elbow.

West side.

Top shelf, left to right. Corinthian.

Statuette. A boy reclining on a rock; he is nude except for sandals and a wreath. The rock, the left thigh and a part of the torso are restored in plaster.

Statuette. A woman, perhaps a poetess, rests her left elbow on the top of a tall column and leans her head lightly against her hand, in an attitude of contemplation.

Group. Two women standing.

One of the woman lets the cloak slip from her shoulders as she leans pensively against her companion, directing her attention to something in front of them.

Statuette.

A woman standing in an attitude of quiet thought. The figure is set on a high square base, which in turn sets on a thin plinth.

Middle shelf, left to right. Chiefly Attic.

Statuette. A grotesque caricature of a Siren plucked of her feathers. She is represented as a fat old woman with the thin legs of a bird.

Fragment of a small altar.

The greater part of one side is preserved, including the moulded base, which is decorated with an egg and dart pattern. The top is missing. On the side are figures of Dionysos, a Maenad and a young Satyr delicately modelled in high relief.

Fragment of a small altar.

A corner with part of two sides is preserved. On one side a matron with veiled head moves toward the left; on the other side a girl holds up a wreath with which she is about to crown a trophy.

Three statuettes.

The figures imitate suppliant Amazons or Phrygians performing a pantomime. They are dressed in Asiatic costume, and each kneels on a three-legged table. One rests her head against her clasped hands, another has her arms raised above her head and the third extends her hands downward.

Bottom shelf, left to right.

Statuette. From Aegina. Caricature of a poet singing to the accompaniment of a lyre.

He is crowned with a high wreath or stephane, and wears the long robes which were the customary garments of poets and singers. The color, as on most figurines from Aegina, is well preserved.

Statuette. A boy, wrapped in a cloak and wearing a wide-brimmed hat, seated on a rock.

Statuette. A little boy, holding a comic mask in his lap.

He is seated for a moment in the midst of play. The short tunic slips from one shoulder in a natural and charming manner.

Statuette. A boy standing.

He wears a long cloak and a wreath of leaves.

Statuette. A girl seated on a rock, holding a round object in her right hand.

Vases.

Panathenaic amphora (in a separate case).
Lent by Professor Joseph Clark Hoppin.

The amphorae given as athletic trophies in the games held annually at Athens in honor of Athena form a special class among Greek vases because of the persistent use on them of the black-figured technique of decoration. Such a vase won by a successful contestant and cherished during the owner's lifetime was finally placed with him in his grave, and the fact that Panathenaic amphorae have been found in tombs in northern Africa and in southern Italy as well as in Greece indicates how widely interest in the festival of Athena was diffused throughout Greek lands.

The amphora exhibited here, like all the later examples, has a small foot and lightly made handles. Its decoration follows the characteristic scheme; on the front Athena Promachos in full armor stands between two columns which are surmounted by small figures of Athena (left) and Zeus (right). Down the length of the column at the left runs an inscription which regularly appears in the same formula, TON AGENEON AOKON (ΤΩΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ ΣΦΑΙΡΩΝ) "from the games at Athena". Beside the right hand column another inscription, ΘΕΙΟΦΡΑΣΤΟΣ ΗΡΧΕ (Θεοφραστος ΗΡΧΕ) shows that this vase was one of the prizes in the games of 340 B. C., the year in which the archon Theiophrastus held office at Athens. The series of vases dated in this manner from the names of magistrates extends from 367 B. C., to 311 B. C. On the back is painted as usual an athletic scene; here two boxers, their hands bound with straps (the cestus), are attended by their trainer and by a veiled woman named Olympias () a personification of the Olympic games.

Colossal sepulchral amphora (north wall).
Greek. South Italian.

This is a fine example of a class of large ornate vases made by Greek potters in the district of Apulia during the fourth century B. C. for the interior adornment of tombs. The outline of the vase and the tall plastic handles, ending below in the heads of swans and above in volutes decorated with masks of Medusa in relief, are reminiscent of work in bronze. (Compare the bronze amphora exhibited in the Fifth Century Room). The wealth of painted floral ornament on the neck and foot and the use of white and yellow pigment is characteristic of the later period of Greek vase painting, especially in southern Italy.

On the front of the neck is Helios, the Sun-god, in a chariot driving four horses; on the back a nude winged youth holding a broad shallow dish (patera), sits on the open calyx of a flower. The principal designs are on the body of the vase and are composed with strict regard for balance and symmetry. On the back three men and three women are bringing offerings for the dead toward an aedicula or small shrine raised on a high basis, recalling a well-known type of Greek grave monument. Within the shrine stands the figure of a youth holding his horse by the bridle. In a remarkable scene on the front of the vase is depicted the death of Thersites, whose body and severed head lie among the scattered gold vessels which he seems to have been attempting to steal, probably from some sanctuary, when detected and killed by Achilles. At the left Automedon crouches on guard, and at the right Dmos, a slave, recoils in horror. Achilles himself, attended by Phoenix, sits on a couch in his tent awaiting the outcome of his act. From the rafters of the tent hang chariot wheels and armor. Diomedes rushes up from the right drawing his sword to avenge his cousin's death; he is restrained by Menelaos, while Agamemnon advances toward him from the left with a gesture of expostulation. Divinities look down from above; on one side Hermes and Athena, the protectress of both Achilles and Diomedes; from the other side Pan, a favorite of Apulian vase painters, and a winged Fury with naked sword, the agent of divine vengeance for punishing murderers. The name is incised above the head of each figure.

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